WAR ON TERROR:
The Middle East Dimension

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3

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THERE IS AN OLD ADAGE that the first casualty of war is the truth. If offering up this casualty can spare real casualties in lives, it is worth sacrificing some truth. I heard it said the other day, by a very accomplished analyst of the Middle East, that this is not the time for too deep an analysis. There is something to be said for that: the focus must be on winning. Yet, it is still important to get basic assumptions right, and not to let certain untruths—let us call them myths—go unchecked for too long. Practicing certain economies of truth is supposed to handicap the enemy. But if these turn into our own myths, they could wind up handicapping us.

In that spirit, I want to focus on some myths that have emerged in the aftermath of September 11. Some myths, of course, have had a very short shelf life. I no longer see any need to explode the myth that September 11 was a protest against Israel. This myth flourished briefly in the first few days after the attacks, but now it has been relegated to the furthest margins of the public arena. Yes, most people think progress between Israelis and Palestinians would help. But very few believe that the actual attacks were motivated by the breakdown of the "peace process," especially as we know that September 11 was set in motion long before that breakdown. And few think that progress in the peace process would deter future attacks. The more we learn about this plot, the more it seems to have operated on several regional levels. September 11 certainly did not constitute a chapter in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and it seems to belong properly in another book.

Yet, two other myths have taken root, largely because they have arisen within influential quarters in this country. The first purports to explain the motives of the attackers; the second purports to interpret the reaction of the Arab world. These myths are already powerfully ensconced in the American understanding of September 11. Unfortunately, they are both dangerous. By misreading the terrorist motive

and the Arab response, the United States, in the best instance, could cloud the objectives of this war. In the worst instance, it could effectively invite further terrorist attacks.

The first myth has to do with motive in the most general sense, and it has been propagated most effectively by a part of the media. Perhaps it reached fullest flower in the cover article of the October 15, 2001, issue of *Newsweek:* Fareed Zakaria's mega-essay "The Politics of Rage: Why Do They Hate Us?" In that piece, Zakaria argues that the failed states and collapsing societies of the Arab world are awash in resentment against the creativity, wealth, and democracy of the West. The success of America, and the influence radiated by that success, drives them to distraction—and to terrible deeds. The world's greatest losers, the Arabs, are seeking revenge against the world's greatest winners, the Americans. Francis Fukuyama has written something similar, and it can well be argued that this has become the preferred spin of those who think history has truly ended with the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism. What we are dealing with, they seem to say, is a rearguard action by the losers in the great battle among organizing principles of humankind. Needless to say, by this analysis, we do flatter ourselves a bit.

I propose a different thesis. Yes, America is hated by many Muslims, and it is a reflection of their resentment against American success and power. But it is actually worse, because this rage against America is mingled with contempt—contempt for America's perceived weakness, a weakness most manifest in the Middle East. It is the contempt, not the hatred, which poses the immediate danger. And while you cannot do anything about the hatred—after all, it is a side effect of your success—you can and must do something to diminish the contempt.

Let me frame the question this way: are we certain that, in Arab and Muslim eyes, the United States really does look like the great winner? It is not difficult to see why Osama bin Laden and his cohorts have a rather different view. After all, they defeated another superpower, the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan. You think you won the Cold War. They think they won it. To them, the United States is a similar giant with similar feet of clay. And they summon their best evidence right from their doorstep in the Middle East.

The new contempt dates from the Iranian revolution, "Exhibit A" for American weakness. In Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

threw out the shah, held Americans hostage, sent his agents to kill Americans by the hundreds in Lebanon, and got away with it. Iran is a shining instance of successful defiance of the United States, evidence that you can run a major state in the region for more than twenty years completely outside the orbit of American influence. The list of most-wanted terrorists was published recently. Several of those on that list killed Americans sixteen years ago, and still roam free in Iran.

In the 1990s, the record was no better. Saddam Husayn crossed every line in the sand, spit in the face of the United States, and got pummeled in return—but still stands on his own two feet. Other Arabs may not have a lot of sympathy for Saddam. But he is living, breathing proof in their eyes that the United States never presses its advantage, that it remains highly "risk-averse" in the Middle East, that it does not always get its man, and that you can defy the last superpower and live to fight another day.

Do you remember the horror of Pan Am Flight 103? A single Libyan operative went to prison for this, while Muammar Qadhafi recently celebrated his thirty-second year in power. Perhaps removing Qadhafi would have been a very tall order. But what about removing the Somali warlord Muhammad Aideed, against whom a previous administration sent the Marines? It turned out that getting him was too tall an order as well.

Consider Osama bin Laden. He has been America's "most wanted" for years. Yet, aside from a few misguided cruise missiles, no serious operation was mounted against him until now. Many Muslims admire him not just because of what he says about the United States, but because the United States has not killed him yet. The bin Laden we saw in the most recent video was not spewing hate, he was displaying outright contempt, wagging his finger at America while sipping tea.

Perhaps there is rage against American power in these attacks. But there is even more contempt for America's weakness—its perceived lack of resolve; its quickness to forgive, or at least forget; its penchant for creating categorical boxes, like the state sponsors of terrorism list, and then ignoring them altogether. This is perceived as weakness, and when you are perceived as weak in the Middle East, you become a tempting target and the vultures begin to circle. Needless to say, the images of the Twin Towers in flames have only

compounded the problem. America now appears still weaker, more vulnerable than ever.

But paradoxically, Americans seem almost too concerned with the hatred. America wants and even expects to be loved in the world. It wants to be admired and respected. And it is shocked to discover that in many quarters, it is hated. The desire to be loved, the bewilderment at being despised, are endearing American foibles. And it is curiously endearing to see American statesmen running to mosques, telling the world that Islam is a religion of peace—in the hope that this love will be returned.

But September 11 has to bring America to two realizations. First, while it is good to be loved and admired, it is more important to be feared. The United States is not sufficiently feared in the Middle East. If it wants to maintain its own interests or even simply deter attacks against its homeland, it will have to rectify that impression. And second, although no one likes to be the target of hatred, it is far worse to be the subject of contempt. Look, for example, at the suicide pilots, the men who spent long months, even years, here in America. What is striking is not their hatred for this country, but their contempt: the fact that America is so naively trusting of foreigners, that it gives everyone the benefit of the doubt, and that it is willing to sell the very training needed to destroy it.

The people in the streets of Karachi or Cairo who burn U.S. president George W. Bush in effigy are in a blind rage, but they are not dangerous. They do not know enough about America to be dangerous. The dangerous ones are like these suicide pilots—those who are familiar with America, who know where to find a Wal-Mart or how to get a credit card, whose idea of the "women of paradise" probably owes more to MTV than to anything they saw back in their dusty corner of Saudi Arabia. Their own familiarity with America has bred a deep contempt, far more deadly than impotent rage. The hatred will always be there. It comes with the turf, and it is the price of success. Get used to it. But contempt is another story. It is much more dangerous, and it will eat away at your deterrence.

Contempt can be banished, however, if you work at it. Let me summarize this way: nothing engenders greater respect in the Middle East than the rewarding of your friends and the certain punishment of your enemies. Over the past two decades, the United States has

gained a reputation for inconsistency on both counts. And this has left America more vulnerable. American credibility cannot be reestablished overnight. But the United States has now been given an opportunity, a license, to rebuild it. It is the gift given by the thousands who perished, and it seems to me absolutely crucial that this second chance not be missed—not only if U.S. interests are to be defended abroad, but also if the American way of life is to be preserved at home.

And in the region, this means that you must smite your enemy in a decisive and demonstrative way. This requires two things. First, you must get rid of the Taliban regime. The United States has not deposed a regime in the Middle East in fifty years. It must do so now. Second, you must get Osama bin Laden—and not in one, two, or sixteen years. Every day he lives is an affront to American credibility.

Let me be clear: nothing you do will ever even the score for September 11. But do these two things, and you will rebuild the gaping hole left in your wall of deterrence. Do these two things, and you will create awe and fear among the multitudes. Fail, and you will engender derision and contempt—and the fear will be yours. Fail, and the "war on terror" could become something like the "war on drugs"—not a matter of a few years but of decades, a struggle waged indecisively against a succession of bin Laden impersonators who continue along the path of terror because the gains outweigh the risks, and in the end it pays off.

I come now to the second myth, regarding the Arab response. This myth has its origins not in the media but in government. It is best appreciated in a quotation from Secretary of State Colin Powell: "Out of a deep sense of shared humanity, and a chilling appreciation of common vulnerability to terrorism, we see new scope to strengthen our relations with the Islamic world."

No one can doubt all of our shared humanity, or that it includes the Islamic world. And no one can doubt that it is in America's interests to strengthen relations with the Islamic world. But I would like to focus on an assumption that I found perplexing: that the Arab world shares with America "a chilling appreciation of common vulnerability to terrorism." Or, as someone else put it, "Saudi and Egyptian support is not a favor to us; it is an act of self-defense." When I first read these arguments, I was perplexed, because some-

thing about them did not ring precisely true. Now, after more than a month of American diplomacy predicated on this assumption, I am more certain than ever that it is not true—and because it is false, any attempt to build a coalition on this assumption is destined to falter and fail.

Obviously, Osama bin Laden is a Saudi, and the perpetrators of the crimes in New York and Washington were Saudis and Egyptians. Bin Laden's network is made up primarily of nationals belonging to Arab countries in the Middle East. It is also true that this network would like to topple Arab regimes. But Osama bin Laden wound up in Afghanistan for a reason. And the reason, in a nutshell, is this: his brand of Islamic fundamentalism has been driven out of the Arab Middle East, where it has ceased to be much of a problem.

Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the lot of them are in Afghanistan precisely because they failed in the Middle East. When the Afghan jihad ended, bin Laden and many other Arabs left Afghanistan to return to the region. Once in place, they did try to terrorize regimes, assassinate leaders, and seize power. But they failed. By the late 1990s, those regimes had them cornered. The rulers in the Arab world were not about to be terrorized out of their presidential or royal palaces, and they unleashed a massive counteroffensive. Egypt put some 50,000 fundamentalists in its prisons; hundreds went to the gallows. In Saudi Arabia, those who were not beheaded were exiled. Today, no Arab regime faces a credible threat from Islamist extremists.

In fact, what happened in New York and Washington was, to some extent, a consequence of the Arab success in pushing those like bin Laden to the margins. Since the extremists could not defeat the Arab regimes, they went over their heads and attacked the American patron of those regimes. Since they could not build a network in Saudi Arabia or Egypt without it being betrayed and its members sent off to torture chambers, they built networks in East Africa, and even in America itself.

Osama bin Laden and his crowd want to drive America from the entire Middle East in order to topple regimes. But they have no strong base in the region itself, nor can they easily strike there. So they have gone straight for the jugular—and there is no greater jugular than lower Manhattan.

This means that, at the moment, there is no one in the Middle East who shares a sense of "common vulnerability" to terrorism, except Israel. In the 1990s, the Arab states had a terrorism problem, and they got rid of it by the usual methods: mass arrests, torture, expulsions, "disappearances," and so on. These states are not threatened in any way by terrorism, which they have pushed out to Afghanistan and the West where it is somebody else's problem—above all, America's. In the region, there is some sympathy for bin Laden because he symbolizes defiance of the West. But only the smallest minority of Arabs would want to live under a Taliban-style regime. Actually, there seems to be less "turmoil" in the Arab street than there was during the Gulf War. The Arab world is riveted by the September 11 story, but so far it has not been moved by it.

The regimes are not threatened, and this is why the Arabs are not going to be very predictable partners in this coalition. Every time Americans sit down to talk to them about terrorism, they are going to want to talk about other things that really do worry them: what they want from Israel, how many weapons they need, how much their debts weigh on them, or how much they want for their oil.

One can understand why some American diplomats might look upon this "war on terror" as a possible theme around which to organize the Middle East. Right now, there is no organizing theme, and that is a problem. During the Cold War, the United States tried to organize the region on the basis of the Soviet threat, which inspired the Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and so on. This never worked particularly well, because the states of the region felt more threatened by one another than by the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, the United States tried to organize the Middle East around the "peace process" and economic cooperation, the so-called "new Middle East." This, too, never quite worked, since Arabs feared it might become a form of veiled Israeli hegemony.

Now, some seem intent on organizing the region around the "war on terror," buttressed by the ancillary notion that America is the true defender of Islam. All of this is perfectly understandable, but let us be frank. The war on terror is shaky scaffolding for a new Middle East architecture—even shakier than the Soviet threat and the peace process. Already the Saudis are stonewalling, the Egyptians are balk-

ing—and these are America's friends. Arab governments do not need American help to fend off fundamentalist terrorism these days; they are looking for some bigger payoff before they get on board.

But even if the Arab governments were willing, and there were something to be gained from their cooperation, chasing after these fickle friends has a major downside: it signals that the United States needs the blessing of others before responding to an attack on its own territory. In essence, America is saying that even its own self-defense is legitimate only if it is approved by a "rainbow coalition," which ironically includes not a few veteran America-bashers. There is something unseemly in this image of the United States seeking the support of a lot of tin pots. If the United States smashes the Taliban and gets bin Laden, no damage will have been done. But if this whole grand coalition fails to meet minimal goals, it could contribute to the kind of contempt that made September 11 an appealing strategy in the first place.

These then, it seems to me, are two myths that must be challenged before the end of hostilities. The war's outcome must create awe and banish contempt. No amount of kowtowing to Islam can substitute for victory. And since America is going to win this war by itself anyway, victory should be made to look unquestionably like America's triumph, not the triumph of a gerrymandered coalition. The less credit you share, the more awe you will induce.

Finally, do not neglect your friends. There is an old adage: keep your friends close, and your enemies closer. Be careful not to confuse the two. Israel does not need to be a big cog in this coalition—the latter is unlikely to last very long anyway. But America will do itself more harm if it even appears to be shunning its friends. This will not produce more Arab respect; it will only invite more Arab contempt—adding to the problem, rather than subtracting from it.

The best guarantee that there will not be a next time is for America to rely on itself to win this war, and on its proven friends to build a common wall of deterrence. So far, the going has been easy in the American offensive against terror. At some point, it will get tough. When it does, the United States will find out who its real friends are. And on that day, it will need more than Arabic.

5

Discussion

Robert B. Satloff, *The Washington Institute:* These two talks are provocative for numerous reasons, not least because both of you seem to conclude that regimes in the Middle East are not plagued by the same fear and vulnerability that we may feel in the United States regarding the Islamist threat. The issue is important because of the uncertainty in Washington concerning how this threat will—or will not—motivate local regimes to act in concert with our objectives.

The floor is now open to questions from the audience.

Kanan Makiya, *Iraq Research and Documentation Project:* Martin, in your address, why did you not include regime change in the Arab world at large—not just in Afghanistan—as one prong of a new, more decisive U.S. policy in the region? If the United States wants to send a message to the Arab world, should it not also have a target in the Arab world?

Martin Kramer: I do not think anyone wants to become involved in a war on two fronts simultaneously. First, achieve these two minimal goals in Afghanistan. Then America can look across the region, take the measure of other opportunities, and see what can be done to reverse—not just stall—this trend of growing contempt for the United States. There are other possibilities, but the United States will not be able to pursue other options until it has had clear success in the war that it has declared. First, there has to be something that looks and tastes like victory in Afghanistan.

Trudy Rubin, *Philadelphia Inquirer:* On Egypt, given that Sadatism continued after Anwar Sadat, will it continue after Hosni Mubarak? On Saudi Arabia, is there sufficient "rot" in the kingdom to cause problems, or is it containable?

Ibrahim Karawan: With regard to Egypt, I think one component of Sadatism would continue in a post-Mubarak era, regardless of Egypt's

political configuration, and that is disengagement from the military component of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The strongest support for that disengagement comes from the most important institution in Egypt, the military establishment. The military are the first to appreciate the futility of going back to a situation of conflict. They know the gaps; they know the costs.

The second strongest support comes from the economic elites, who realize that engagement creates a bad climate for business and for economic issues. The third level of support—often underestimated—is that of the public. Some people think of the "Arab street" as those who appear at al-Azhar University shouting "Death to America," which, by the way, I believe they are entitled to do. The question is, do their opinions translate into official policy? This is the more serious matter.

In Egypt, support for disengagement is very strong and comes from the street. Only a few thousand individuals want to return to the struggle to liberate the land "from the river to the sea." This discussion is about those few thousand people. The rest of them do not want to send their kids to the Suez Canal again. Why should they? What happens to the political system in this scenario is a different story. You could have greater opening or greater restrictions, depending on who assumes power after Mubarak.

On Saudi Arabia, I do not think there is the kind of vulnerability to which some have referred. The regime uses multiple languages, and it is not completely without resources in the short run, contrary to some impressions. Sometimes people underestimate Saudi coping mechanisms.

Kramer: Many observers look at Saudi conduct since September 11 and assume that they are stonewalling because they do not want to confront the devil within. But the Saudis are not weak or afraid; they are ashamed. And there is a real difference. We saw the same kind of shame at work in the Egyptian government's investigation of the EgyptAir Flight 990 crash.

Currently, the Saudis are practicing what they do whenever they are ashamed, which is to engage in denial. When the Saudi interior minister asked U.S. officials, "Why are you focusing only on the Arabs that were on those airplanes? There were four hundred passen-

gers," it is not because he is afraid. He is in denial over the shame of it. So we should be careful not to confuse issues and assume that every time America is stonewalled by its friends—Egyptians or Saudis—that those friends are actually shaking in their boots. They are not.

Karawan: You mentioned the source of Egyptian shame but did not explain it. Could you elaborate?

Kramer: There will be an article in the November 2001 *Atlantic Monthly** by a former pilot who investigated the EgyptAir affair; he went with the predisposition that perhaps the National Transportation Safety Board had made a mistake. But when he got to Egypt, he discovered a whole culture of denial that had arisen with deeply rooted cultural antipathy and resentment. He discovered that the other Egyptian pilots knew for certain that this plane was sentenced to the drink by the pilot. But the bureaucracy and the government were unable and unwilling to allow that an Egyptian national could have precipitated such a horrible event. This made the Egyptian investigation the mirror opposite of the American investigation.

The taking of collective responsibility for all Egyptian nationals is a curious thing. I am not suggesting that Western governments would not have done something similar. But in some Arab governments, you see this tendency to view the population as a herd of sheep tended by the shepherd. The collective shame that "one of the flock" could be responsible for a deed like this is simply overwhelming.

Philip Gordon, *Brookings Institution:* Even if America deals successfully with Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan, is there not great potential for the larger issue—that is, the nature of the regimes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt—to remain an American problem? Should we not think much more seriously about how to deal with that problem?

Kramer: The United States has first to decide what the meaning of September 11 is for the Middle East. Is it "day one" of an entirely

* William Langewiesche, "The Crash of EgyptAir 990," *Atlantic Monthly* 288, no. 4, pp. 41–52.

new era in which all past sins are forgiven and everyone is judged by their conduct henceforth? To some extent, that is the message the United States has sent in constructing its coalition. Lots of regimes have had their slates wiped clean. It seems that at this moment the only troublemaker who has carried a balance over into this new era is Iraq, although it is not at all clear just how much has been carried over. A decision will have to be made as to whether September 11 has created a new world in which everyone begins anew with a *tabula rasa.*

I am worried by the notion that the next phase, whether or not Iraq is a target, should involve American-initiated efforts to reform the politics of the Middle East, to create political space, and so forth. Right now, the United States does not have enough Arabic speakers to translate and analyze all of the plots fomenting against it; how will Washington reform the politics of the Arab world? It is a very tall order indeed.

A little humility is in order here. The United States, unlike Britain and France, has always been most effective when it operates "over the horizon" and "offshore." Those arguing for engagement in political reform are talking about a deep and intimate kind of involvement in an incredibly complex labyrinth.

The Arab world looks like a swamp, but it actually could be worse. When the Soviet Union collapsed, everyone assumed that things would get better in the Balkans. In much of Europe they did, but in that corner of Europe things got much worse. There has not been a Bosnia or a Rwanda in the Arab world in the last decade, and there has to be some caution in tinkering with the existing order. Yes, it would be wonderful if there were more space in the politics of the Arab world. But it would be disastrous if we had one or two or more Bosnias on our hands as a result.

Participant: Does the United States have a right to make certain demands of its coalition partners? What "litmus tests" should exist in the coalition-building phase of this campaign?

Karawan: Degrees of friendship are important to the formation of coalitions. But insisting that partner states must have a certain kind of political system in order to participate in a coalition is a luxury

that no superpower can afford, especially in the post–September 11 environment. The United States may have a right to express its views about other political systems, but this does not mean that it can impose a "democratic test" for admission into its coalition; America would end up with very few partners if it did so.

Different types of cooperation are also important. For instance, some countries are willing to share their files on wanted terrorists, and others might view this as a modest contribution. Should it be deemed cowardly? No, such cooperation is useful at times when intelligence information is needed. Moreover, not all regimes are willing to make explicit verbal pronouncements about their particular contributions. Egypt happens to be among the countries whose level of security cooperation with the United States is quite extensive.

As the United States considers what course of action to take in the Middle East in the wake of September 11, it is important to remember the importance of context. Not that America should focus only on the motives of the terrorists—the United States could win over millions of Middle Easterners by legitimately addressing those grievances, but it would not appease the few thousand who support the terrorists.

The grievances of the Middle East are real, but it is crucial that legitimate expressions of Arab public opinion be separated from the supposed motives of the September 11 terrorists. Any concerted effort to link a particular Arab cause with the September 11 attacks would destroy any fruitful discourse about that cause. For example, although it is perfectly reasonable for Arab publics to be indignant concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is pointless to speculate about whether the conflict's status might have played a role in encouraging or preventing the attacks on the United States. We should denounce such speculation, because any cause that gets associated—however tenuously—with September 11 is going to be weakened. Those who speculate in this manner have no real way of knowing what might have been. Theirs is a metaphysical argument.

Roger Harrison, *National Defense University:* I was raised in the tradition that took as an article of faith the adage "nations don't have friends, they have interests." Therefore, I take Dr. Kramer's point to

have been that American and Israeli interests now and in the period ahead are coincident. Where might those interests not be coincident?

Kramer: Winning wars requires both myth-breaking and a true assessment of friendship. Friendship is, of course, based on the long-term confluence of interests and ideals. No one can tell me that the relationship between the United States and Britain is based solely on interests and has no element of friendship, which has to do with things that are shared beyond mere interests. The relationship between the United States and Israel falls in the same category, whether or not it is of the same order. Friends are those who, when the going gets tough, will stand by you, not just because your immediate interests are identical, but because there is some additional element like shared values, shared ideals, or a shared vision. There is probably a good deal of commonality among America's friends—not just Britain and Israel, but in Europe and elsewhere—who share these values.

Of course, I am not antagonistic to making Arabs and Muslims partners in the coalition against terrorism as well. But the United States should not rely on its Arab coalition partners for success in the Afghanistan campaign. The value of the coalition in the Middle East, as opposed to the coalition in southern Asia, is largely that of a totem; it is not an operational coalition. America needs a coalition with the Pakistanis, the Tajiks, and the Uzbeks in order to win the war in Afghanistan; but this grouping should not be confused with the totemic coalition in the Middle East. The greatest totem of them all, of course, is the insistence that America avoid making its campaign seem like a war between civilizations. That is a worthwhile goal, but it does not constitute an operational alliance.

Abdul Raouf al-Reedy, *former Egyptian ambassador to the United States:* How can America convince Arabs that it will now address the Arab-Israeli problem with more vigor? At the beginning of the Gulf War, President George H. W. Bush assured the region that after America liberated Kuwait, it would immediately turn its full attention to the Palestinian problem. A decade later, little real progress has been made. If the current administration offers a similar promise, will it follow through?

Karawan: The question is not whether the Arab-Israeli conflict should be addressed. It should be addressed on its own merits because it is a major source of instability in the region. But the same factors creating a stalemate before September 11 may still exist now, with no added reason to justify optimism other than the fact that it is better to try than not to try. It is important to realize that serious gaps remain between the Israelis and the Arabs, and that these gaps might now be wider, not narrower. This does not justify avoiding the issue, but neither should we predict a quick success in that effort unless America decides to vigorously twist Israel's arm, which I do not think will be the case.

Kramer: There is no doubt that bin Laden's public statements are fishing expeditions, and that he will use the Arab-Israeli issue to further his cause as others have. The difficulty is that solving these problems has become a much longer term proposition than many imagined. That is the lesson of the 1990s. Can you really afford to delay victory in the war against terrorism in order to solve these other long-term problems? There are phases in this war, and we should not confuse them or get them out of order. Issues like Iraq and Arab-Israeli relations will have to be addressed eventually; for now, let us stay focused on the present phase.

Mohammed Wahby, al-Mussawar *newspaper:* Was it really a feeling of contempt for the United States that motivated the September 11 attacks, or was it a sense of powerlessness among some extremist groups? Powerlessness is the opposite of contempt.

Kramer: I do not disagree with you. Yes, there is the sense of powerlessness. There is rage. There is hatred. But I argue that this mix becomes dangerous when you add to it contempt. For a potential recruit in a network like bin Laden's, the feeling of personal powerlessness can no doubt be a powerful motivation. Feelings of rage, hatred, and resentment are also very powerful. Yet, it is contempt that acts as a catalyst. And it is this contempt that can be most readily addressed because the United States has undeniable, overwhelming power.

That brings me to another point: what it means to have the upper hand. Basically, the United States has to create an aura of deterrence, to make people think not once, or twice, or ten times, but a thousand times before they contemplate acts like those of September 11. If America does not create that aura, it has come to the point of accepting terrorism as a way of life. This is the problem we have in Israel; terrorism is a way of life because we operate under so many constraints. But can America afford to accept terrorism as a way of life? If it cannot, then it will have to do something that Israel cannot do itself, which is to deliver an unrestrained blow to the perpetrators of these acts and those who shelter them. Frankly, the United States cannot allow itself to live as people in the Middle East do, with terrorism as a fact of life. It would be a betrayal of everything for which this country stands.

There has to be something that looks not like retribution (retribution is not part of American culture) but that nevertheless demonstrates the resolve of the United States and recreates the wall of deterrence. It is less important to rebuild the World Trade Center than it is to reerect that wall of deterrence.

American culture is a culture of "moving on." This is a country made of people who picked up, left everything behind, and moved on. Americans periodically reset the scoreboard. But the United States is now dealing with another kind of culture—one that keeps score. They have been keeping score since the Crusades, and the scoreboard is still running. This is the fundamental contradiction that America faces. Americans do not have to go back 600 years, but they do need to start keeping score, not so much for themselves, but for the sake of understanding how others perceive and feel about them. If there is a bottom line here, this is it: keep score. At this moment, it seems to me that the score is "Osama bin Laden three, the United States one."